

April 22, 2009

Women's golf equals highest finish ever at SBC Championships

Blue Raiders shoot best round on final day to secure third

Athletic Communications

HOUSTON - Middle Tennessee saved its best for last with a 6-over 294 in the final round to climb to third place and equal its best finish ever in the SBC Women's Golf Championships at the Cypresswood Golf Club Wednesday.

Photos: [Final Round Gallery](#)

The Blue Raiders continued to receive quality contribution throughout the lineup to make a move on the leaderboard and hold off higher-rated teams on the event's final day. Middle Tennessee also finished third at the SBC Championships in 2004 and 2006.

No. 19-ranked Denver successfully defended its title, winning the championship by 14 shots over second-place UALR. The Pioneers shot 5-under 859 for the three-day event.

"I'm very proud of the team and the way they kept their composure and battled throughout this tournament," said Middle Tennessee second-year coach Chris Adams, whose team finished fourth at the event in her debut season. "We were able to get off to a good start and we maintained that throughout the three days. We had some bumps along the way but we did a good job of overcoming those. It was a good showing and good run for our team. There are many positives."

Among the positives is the fact three players in Middle Tennessee's lineup will return in 2009-10 as Adams fielded a younger team this season; however, the veterans in the group represented the team well and helped lead the charge at the SBC Championships.


Senior **Leigh Wilkins** tied for ninth with a 6-over 222 and fellow senior **Mallory Bishop** also finished her career strong by tying for 18th with a 12-over 228. **Morgan Hale** also tied for 18th. **Clara Leathers** (17-over, 233) tied for 32nd and freshman **Karisa Akin** (21-over, 237) tied for 41st in her first conference championship.

Wilkins capped her best season as a Blue Raider in memorable fashion. The Murfreesboro, Tenn., native was 3-under 69 in the final round but it was her play on the back nine that was stupendous. She played the back at 4-under and closed with a birdie on 17 and followed with an eagle on the par-4 No. 18 when she knocked it in from 130 yards out for her last college shot.

Her final nine holes featured two birdies, an eagle and six pars.

"I am glad I was able to finish the way I did and help the team have a good, solid finish at the (SBC Championships)," Wilkins said. "I've had a great career at Middle Tennessee and developed a lot of great memories. I'm proud to have been part of this team because I



Leigh Wilkins tied for ninth individually at the SBC Championships. She fired a 3-under 69 in Wednesday's final round. (B. Lambert) 

think we made progress this year and we showed that at the end with our highest finish ever at the conference tournament."

Bishop also came through in the clutch with a strong showing at the SBC Championships. The Knoxville, Tenn., native played the front even to help the Blue Raiders enjoy a strong, confident start. She was 3-over in the final round and turned in a Top 20 finish.

Hale also was splendid as Middle Tennessee had to hold off FIU and Florida Atlantic - each higher-rated teams - for third place. Hale was 1-over in the final round and collected four birdies.

SBC Women's Golf Championships

Houston, Texas

Cypresswood Golf Club - Cypress Course, Par-72

Final Team Results

- 1 Denver 293-284-282 859 -5
- 2 UALR 305-288-280 873 +9
- 3 Middle Tennessee 304-309-294 907 +43**
- T4 Florida Atlantic 309-302-298 909 +45
- T4 FIU 314-303-292 909 +45
- 6 Troy 312-302-300 914 +50
- 7 North Texas 318-302-295 915 +51
- 8 Arkansas State 313-314-304 931 +67
- 9 ULM 319-311-305 935 +71
- 10 South Alabama 317-306-313 936 +72
- 11 WKU 319-318-315 952 +88

3 MT Scores (907)

- T9 **Leigh Wilkins** 75-78-69 222 +6
- T18 **Morgan Hale** 77-78-73 228 +12
- T18 **Mallory Bishop** 72-81-75 228 +12
- T32 **Clara Leathers** 80-76-77 233 +17
- T41 **Karisa Akin** 80-77-80 237 +21

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